

Visit of Guru Nanak to Puri

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Five hundred years ago, two great luminaries appeared on the horizon of India, one on the east and the other in the west. They were Chaitanya and Nanak. Nanak was the founder of the Sikh religion.

In 1506 Nanak visited seven countries in India. He lived for 71 years and within his life time he is believed to have spent 25 years in travelling all over India from Himalaya to the Cape Comorein. He also visited Macca and Madina, Turkey and China. It has been estimated that he had walked about 50,000 miles on his foot with wooden sandals. He also converted Raja Seonath, the king of Cylon to his own religion. Before proceeding towards cylon he visited Orissa.

Tradition says that after walking a long distance, he rested on the bank of river Mahanadi at 'Kaliaboda'. Many people went to Nanak to pay their homage. This made Chaitanya Bharati envious who beat Nanak with a twig of Sahada tree. But at the very sight of Nanak the twig automatically dropped out of his hand and he implored his mercy. Nanak took the Sahada twig for brushing his teeth and planted the same on the spot. In course of time it grew into a beautiful tree which stood there for years. This is a sacred place of the Sikhs. As Nanak brushed his teeth here (danta) it is

called 'Danton Saheeb'. But this legend has no historical basis. As regards the name 'Kaliaboda' it can be stated that one Kalia Pandit took the care of the place and so it has been named as 'Kaliaboda'. Again it can be stated in different connection. Kaliabedi was the father of Nanak and he was a Hindu. It was therefore possible that in order to show respect to the father of Nanak the place might have been named as such. There is no evidence to corroborate the above presumption. It is a subject for future research. Kaliaboda, nevertheless is an important place of pilgrimage for the Sikhs.

There is also clear evidence in Bhadrak District that Nanak came to Orissa. In Bhadrak there is a village called 'Sangat' which means mass prayer of Sikhs and Langar means community dining. In this village Nanak stayed and held mass prayer. There is a recorded plot here called 'Nanak Diha'. Most probably Nanak stayed in this village and held his mass prayer. It will be relevant to mention here that in Sangat village poet Bansi Ballabh Goswami was born in the 18th century and composed poetry and drama in Oriya, Bengali, Hindi and Persian. In some of his poems he has given some indications regarding the village Sangat, Nanak and Mahadev and Deity of the village. In 1930, Raj Ballabh Mohanty



in his '*Bhadra Kali Janana*' composed in Oriya has referred to village '*Sangat*' and '*Nanak*'.

Besides that a few manuscripts containing some verses from the famous *Japji* of Guru Nanak were also discovered at Sangat in Bhadrak.

Legend shows that Nanak arrived at Puri with his disciple 'Mardana'.

Nanak reached Puri beach in the evening near the present *Swargadwar*. He sat down in meditation. Mardana was hungry but as he was a Muslim he was not allowed to enter into the Jagannath temple for the Mahaprasad. So the disciple of Nanak blamed Nanak for selecting such a place where they had to face starvation. Suddenly at that time somebody appeared and offered food and drink carrying in utensils of gold. In the early hours of morning however there was a commotion in Jagannath temple that the gold utensils of the Lord were missing. The news was given to Raja. Nanak appeared to Raja in his dream that night. So when Raja knew regarding the occurrence of theft, he gave a broad smile and marched towards sea-beach in a procession to welcome the saint. Raja found that the saint was in meditation and the gold utensils were lying close by. Then the king and his party gave a hearty reception to the saint who had come to Puri to pay his homage to the Lord Jagannath. Nanak was invited to pay his visit to the temple at the time of Arati in the evening.

During the day as water was required he advised the disciples to dig a hole in the sandy surface of sea-beach and to their surprise sweet water came out.

A well was constructed around this hole. Near that well a Gurudwar called Bauli Saheb came into existence. This is now called

'*Baulimath*'. It is said that it was constructed by Nanak. This is a very sacred place for the Sikhs.

One day while Raja and all other devotees were assembled to pay homage to Lord Jagannath, Nanak explained the real meaning of God. He told the crowd that God is present everywhere and does not belong to any individual or community. By saying so he showed both his palms on which Lord Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra had rested.

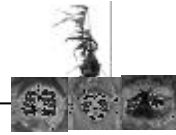
The Gurugrantha Sahib, the sacred religious book of the Sikhs is one of the most sacred books in the world. It consists of 5894 hymns out of which 976 hymns were composed by Nanak. In 1604 it was compiled by the 5th Guru Arjun Dev.

The great lyric poet Jayadev of Orissa finds a place of eminence for his hymns in the '*Grantha Sahib*' of Orissa. It is not known how the Punjabi language was influenced by the songs of Jayadev. I would like to quote in a few lines of Nanak which are quoted in the Journal of the University of Bombay, Vol.vi, pp.29-130.

Guna gaba Ravidasu Bhagatu

Jayadeva Trilochana Adi Gurugrantha Sahibji

From the *bhajan*s of Nanak it is clear that he was highly impressed with the lyrical songs of 'Jayadev'. At that time the songs of Jayadev were regularly recited in the temple of Lord Jagannath at Puri. It also appears that Chaitanya and Guru Nanak both met at Puri and spent some time there. Of course we do not have any direct evidence from contemporary literature to substantiate but we find the following in Chaitanya Bhagbat of Iswar Das written in Oriya in 17th Century.



Srinibasaye Viswambhara
Kirtan madyare vihar
Nanak Saranga ye dui
Rupa Sanatana duibhai
Jagai Madhai ekatra
Kirtan Karanti Nritya

It means that Srinibasa and Viswambhara were found in the *Kirtan*. Both 'Nanak' and 'Saranga' Rupa Sanatan brothers and 'Jagai' 'Madhai' were also there in *Kirtan*.

Nanak's aim in life was to bring religious and social harmony in India. He based his principles of religion on one issue that 'God' is one for all the religions of the different nations, communities, castes and creeds in the world. By this principle he tried

to bring unity and harmony among the different religions. His creation of the Sikh community imbued with a strong sense of nationalism is a great asset of India.

References :

1. *Journal of the University of Bombay* Vol.VI, pp.129-130.
2. *Saint Nanak* - Aniruddha Dash, 1971, Bhubaneswar.
3. Gopal Singh, *Sri Gurugrantha Sahib* Vol.I.

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Lingaraj Temple Compound : Anantesvara temple; Baladev - Ekanamsa - Krsna Trinity (Copy right: ASI)